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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 002400

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SUBJECT: OUTPOSTS CONTINUE TO GROW AMIDST SETTLER
APPREHENSION ABOUT THE FUTURE

REF: JERUSALEM 02390

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On November 16, Congen Poloff and Peace Now Settlements Watch Director Hagit Ofran visited 13 West Bank outposts believed to be on the GoI's list of 26 outposts for possible removal. Each of the outposts has five to sixty caravans (mobile homes) on hilltops in the vicinity of existing settlements that provide them electricity, water, and security. PolOff saw on-going construction at many outposts. PolOff also visited 10 additional outposts identified by Peace Now, but not believed to be under GOI consideration for removal. Settlers seemed anxious, perhaps about on-going discussions about outpost removal, and at Havat Gilad, settler youth expressed concern that the ConGen vehicle contained GOI representatives. According to Peace Now, removal of outposts will likely mean moving residents from privately-owned Palestinian land to state land. END SUMMARY.

"No new outposts"

12. (C) During a seven hour, 400 km road tour with Peace Now's Settlement Watch Director Hagit Ofran on 16 November, ConGen PolOff visited or viewed 13 of the 26 outposts that are believed to have been identified for possible removal: Mitzpe Yitzhar, Yitzhar South, Havat Gilad, Haroe, Nofei Nehemia, Kida, Migron, Givat Assaf, Neve Daniel North, Bat Ayin West, Gal (reftel), Avigail, and Susiya Northwest. (Note: According to the press, PM Olmert announced November 19 his intention to remove the illegal outposts after Annapolis. According to contacts, 26 outposts are believed to be on the GOI "list," but there is no confirmed, public list. End Note.) According to Ofran, all of the 26 outposts were built on privately-owned Palestinian land after former PM Sharon pledged "no new outposts" in March 2001.

13. (C) PolOff observed that each of the outposts has five to sixty caravans (mobile homes) and receives electricity, water, and security from a nearby "mother" settlement. PolOff observed that in several instances, the settlers built their own access roads connecting them to main West Bank roads. At Nofei Nehemia, PolOff traveled a well paved road to several dozen caravans being used as dormitories and a sports complex for students from the college at the nearby Ariel settlement. PolOff observed that settlers are expanding the outposts by bringing in additional mobile homes, which settlers said they bring in piece by piece to avoid the requirement for permits. PolOff saw a flat bed eighteen wheeler transporting nine iron foundation frames for caravans into the established settlement of Shilo, whose "zoned land" includes Kida outpost, and at Kida, PolOff observed twenty caravans and a settler building a new caravan.

¶4. (C) PolOff observed that settlers at the outposts are anxious, perhaps in anticipation of a GOI decision on the outposts' removal. At Havat Gilad, an outpost on the GoI's list near Nablus, settler youths reacted with concern to the Congen vehicle, indicating to PolOff that they thought it might contain GoI officials or "Arabs." When PolOff explained his presence, the settler youth returned to their construction of a farm house structure.

¶5. (C) According to Peace Now, the number of outposts erected since March 2001 is close to fifty, and the GOI list does not capture them all. PolOff visited or viewed ten of the additional 24 that, according to Peace Now, are not being considered by the GOI for possible removal. PolOff observed that several of these outposts are now empty and those that are inhabited consist of settler squatters in Palestinian-owned homes or a settler water tank, ritual bath, or tent.

Migron Outpost

¶6. (C) PolOff visited Migron, along Route 60 east of Ramallah, which is home to some 60 caravans on privately-owned Palestinian land and the subject of a Peace Now petition in the High Court of Justice. (Note: According to Peace Now, for Palestinians with West Bank land titles, the cost of registering their land with Israeli Civil Administration is 90 percent of the land's total value, so few Palestinians can afford to register their land. Unregistered land is subject to seizure by the state. End Note).

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¶7. (C) According to Peace Now, GOI plans for the removal of outposts means moving them from privately-owned lands to state lands in order to "legalize" them. Below Migron, above the Delek gas station on Route 60, PolOff observed surveyors taking measurements on cleared land, and across Route 60, in the "Binyamin Industrial Zone", construction has advanced on a large structure that settlers claim is a garage for a tire company. Peace Now believes and settlers have hinted to PolOff that this area, which is state land and well east of the separation barrier, will be a "legal" site for the relocation of Migron caravans.

WALLES